

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE
13 November 1961

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CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Reported Viet Cong Bases in Cambodia

1. Available information does not support allegations of large concentrations of Viet Cong in major bases in Cambodia, as reported in the New York Times of 12 November. While there is no doubt that Cambodia is extensively used by the Communists as an infiltration route, sanctuary and staging area for subversive activities in South Vietnam, there is no evidence that Viet Cong installations and command headquarters of the permanent type described in the article, exist in Cambodia. Our evidence does show that Viet Cong forces have operated for years with relative freedom in the Cambodian - South Vietnamese border area, and from time to time have established temporary camps in the more inaccessible regions on the Cambodian side. The number of Viet Cong troops in Cambodia constantly fluctuates, but probably has never approached a total of 6,000 at any given time.

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The chief of MAAG in Cambodia has identified alleged Viet Cong installations in Cambodia in South Vietnamese photographs as Cambodian army camps.

3. The Diem government in recent years has repeatedly accused the Cambodian Government of collusion with the Viet Cong. Last September, Saigon passed to Ambassador Nolting a memorandum allegedly documenting such collusion and claiming that a secret

ARMY review(s) completed.

State Dept. review completed

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pact exists between the governments of Cambodia and North Vietnam. No evidence of such a pact has been uncovered by US officials in South Vietnam or Cambodia, and the American Embassy in Saigon is suspicious of South Vietnam's documentation.

4. Cambodia's armed forces, less than 30,000 men, are incapable of extensive patrolling of the long frontier with South Vietnam and do not pose much of an impediment to fluid Viet Cong operations. Moreover, venal local Cambodian authorities probably are susceptible to Viet Cong bribery. From necessity, therefore, the Phnom Penh Government has countenanced Viet Cong presence on Cambodian soil so long as it has remained inconspicuous. However, Phnom Penh has responded in the past with as much firmness to Viet Cong border depredations as to the more frequent border incidents involving South Vietnamese forces. It is unlikely that the Viet Cong could establish elaborate enclaves in Cambodia without Phnom Penh's knowledge and reaction. Sihanouk is probably completely sincere and confident of the results in making his recent offer to open Cambodia to foreign inspection to disprove the presence of Communist bases as charged by Thailand and South Vietnam.

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